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The Routledge International Handbook of Contemporary Muslim Socio-Political Thought

Edited by Lutfi Sunar

THE ROUTLEDGE INTERNATIONAL HANDBOOK OF CONTEMPORARY MUSLIM SOCIO-POLITICAL THOUGHT

This volume unfolds the ebbs and flows of Muslim thought in different regions of the world, as well as the struggles between the different intellectual discourses that have surfaced against this backdrop. With a focus on Turkey, Egypt, Iran and the Indian subcontinent – regions that, in spite of their particular histories and forms of thought, are uniquely placed as a mosaic that illustrates the intertwined nature of the development of Muslim socio-political thought – it sheds light on the swing between right and left in different regions, the debates surrounding nationalism, the influence of socialism and liberalism, the rise of Islamism and the conflict between state bureaucracy and social movements. Exploring themes of civil society and democracy, it also considers current trends in Muslim thought and possible future directions. As such, it will appeal to scholars across the fields of sociology, anthropology, political science, history and political economy, as well as those with interests in the study of religion, the development of Muslim thought, and the transformation of Muslim societies in recent decades.

Lutfi Sunar is Professor of Sociology at Istanbul Medeniyet University, Turkey. He is the author of *Marx and Weber on Oriental Societies*, the co-editor of *Eurocentrism at the Margins* and *Social Justice and Islamic Economics*, and the editor of *Debates on Civilization in the Muslim World*.

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Lutfi Sunar
Istanbul, January 2021

FOREWORD

Intellectuals, scholars, academics, and political and religious elites in Muslim societies have generally dealt with two basic issues in the contemporary period: political and intellectual confrontation with the West and past. The challenges of colonialism that the Muslim societies have faced for the last two centuries have not only caused Muslim societies to become politically destabilized or economically backward, but have also created an intellectual and scientific inability to sustain themselves. Most of the Muslim countries gained their independence only in the second half of the 20th century. The second issue of the contemporary times is the problem of encountering and confronting modernity. In this sense, there have been problems in the reception of modern thought, as well as in the maintenance of vernacular intellectual traditions.

Today, understanding contemporary thought in Muslim societies has become very important at a time when scientific, intellectual, and technical developments are accelerating. In the face of this reality, I think that this volume will blaze the trail and that the study and understanding of contemporary thought in Muslim societies will constitute a basis for understanding and resolving the problems experienced by the world (or Muslim world) today.

This concise yet comprehensive work is an endeavor that unfolds the historical development and contemporary status of Muslim socio-political thought in selected geographies. Throughout history, Muslim intellectual life was shaped mainly in four countries/regions represented by present-day Turkey, Egypt, Iran, and the Indian subcontinent. These four countries/regions were the main political centers and also intellectual pillars of Muslim socio-political thought for centuries.

This selection is unique in every aspect. While all of these regions share the commonality of their social fabrics and polities pendulating between the right and left extremes, the internal nuances of the intellectual confrontation in these regions make each of them a unique case of its type. In this context, the work is divided into eight broad sections which rotate around different concepts including modernity, religion, social change, politics, political ideologies, formation of nation-states, civil society, and democracy. In this context, the contemporary situation, current dynamics, and future trends of socio-political thought are discussed from a broad perspective and in a comparative manner.

Previous works, when addressing either of the topics brought to light in this book, have usually taken the individual issues in isolation, as a result destroying the overall mosaic formed when the individual concepts are intertwined. The other stream that has addressed these geographies

Foreword

in isolation has resulted in unrealistic overgeneralizations because what was perceived of the concepts mentioned above did not just change over time; it also differed beyond geographical boundaries. The contribution of this volume, therefore, is unique in many aspects. The most important one is that it is a corpus, and hence does not deal with a single region or thought.

In a time when shortcomings and problems of change are deeply felt within the Muslim world, this book has been prepared with the hope that it will contribute to build a broader and comprehensive perspective for the contemporary thought.

I believe in that building bridges and lines of interaction between societies and groups has been the main dynamics of socioeconomic development through history. I hope this volume will contribute to increase the level of the intellectual interaction.

Lutfi Sunar
Istanbul, January 2021

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SECTION III

Islam in the political sphere

9

RETHINKING ISLAMISM IN TURKEY

Beyond conservative or modernist rejectionism

Vahdettin Işık

Introduction

The fact that the 19th century resulted in the removal of Muslims as a global locus of power is widely known. As a result of the efforts that occurred in the wake of making sense of this new situation, various currents of thought emerged. Some took a negative attitude toward renewal efforts based on the attitude of preserving what had already existed in response to modernization. Others proposed completely replacing what had existed. A third approach evaluated the issue not in terms of the new or the old, but in terms of the nature of the new and the old – and whether it responded to what was needed. Those who adopted the last approach regarded a continuation of the old as it had been to be impossible, believing change to be necessary, but did not reject what was traditional. They saw that adopting the new without questioning its nature would contradict Islamic principles as well as historical-social reality. The order formed by those who adopted this approach can be called the Islamic Renewal Movement. In other words, unlike conservative rejectionism and modernist rejectionism, the proposed interpretation of the Islamic Renewal Movement was based on protecting what needed protection and renewing what needed renewal. This approach sought to both remain as itself and also respond to the contemporary challenges through this choice. These three approaches can be said to still continue to shape Turkey's political thoughts and tendencies.

Today, the Islamic Renewal Movement has once again become the focus of discussions on issues such as the connection violent movements have with the Islamization of politics, the relationship between religion and politics, deism, and the place of women in society. Moreover, this debate has been specifically deployed in shaping the frameworks of the discourses of global showdowns rather than being limited to local figures. This chapter aims to identify the problems faced and opportunities that exist and to evaluate them from perspective of the Islamic Renewal Movement's significant experience of more than a century.

The tension between transformation (*Tahawwul*) and remaining true to one's self (*Tahaffuz*)

Early modernization theories, assuming that religion had fulfilled its role, replaced the sacred with the rational in life. According to this approach, the sacred should be left in the heavens, and

ideas and life should be arranged according to earthly principles. This new theology, built upon an anthropocentric world vision, has been defined as Enlightenment in the history of European thought (Kant, 1784/1983).

As a new human design, this European ideology over time projected its views on the universe and life onto the non-European world (İnalçık, 1992, p. 53). An intense effort is known to have occurred in the Islamic world that followed Western philosophy in trying to understand the philosophy of life as shaped by modernity. While some of the policy makers and intellectuals who made this effort preferred to be a part of the Enlightenment thought, others preferred to preserve the historical heritage as it is.¹ A third community found it necessary to both take a stance against the Enlightenment attitude and confront the weaknesses of the accumulation that its civilization had inherited.² This line, which I refer to as the Islamic Renewal Movement, is commonly called Islamism today.

Recalling the main currents of the Islamic tradition in order to ground our conceptualization of the Islamic Renewal Movement may enable its connection to the classical Islamic tradition to be seen. Therefore, the chapter begins by contextualizing the historical Islamic experience. According to Fahreddin al-Razi's classification, two main attitudes can be discussed in the Islamic tradition. One of these lines is the practical and narrative tradition based on the Medina Custom. The second is the mental-theoretical approach that develops an attitude based on the priority of solving the questions/problems Muslims face as a result of encountering different cultures using a dynamic method (er-Râzî, 1986, p. 389; İbn Haldûn, 1981, pp. 1017–1028).

Elmalılı Hamdi Efendi is one of the people who showed the possibilities for talking about the issue within the tradition of Islamic science at a time when the tension between changing and preserving its own identity was at the highest level (Yazır, 1909). Elmalılı tried to explain the issue by asking the question: "Will *fiqh* make new expansions to meet the needs of the time and the environment, or will it withdraw into itself and drag the country into a bigotry?" Elmalılı's answer to this question on one of the famous discussion topics of the period, "whether Islam is an obstacle in the way of progress" (as cited in Corm, 2011, p. 41) is important in terms of showing virtue in determining the relationship between the "new" and the "traditional." According to Hamdi Efendi, the concept of progress has a versatile and relative meaning.³ Nothing in the world alone can provide progress. Real progress is about having virtue. This is because the happiness of society is ensured through virtue. However, virtue means to compromise with oneself for the sake of public good, to prioritize the interests of society over one's personal interests. According to Elmalılı Hamdi Efendi, the only agent of such a renunciation is religion (Yazır, 2011, p. 262). Therefore, progress according to him means to not condescend the values of the past but to bring them to higher values through modifications and new discoveries. What needs to be done for this is to add the values left by those who lived in the past to the values of those who come after (Yazır, 1923, p. 16).

Elmalılı Hamdi Efendi makes an explanation within the framework of the principle of unity. According to him, renewal does not mean giving up being oneself, but revealing the opportunities of the principle of unity [unity of God] to regain existence within its different dimensions. In this way, preserving the existence of the Islamic *ummah* becomes possible as long as a renewal that will meet both theoretical-practical [mental-actual] and material-spiritual needs can be achieved (Yazır, 1923, pp. 34–35).

This modest attitude is not unique to Hamdi Efendi, but can be seen in his contemporary scholars, as well. One of these sound scholars is Babanzade Ahmed Naim Bey, who made the statement in his thesis that made an important proposal for preventing the change from causing a shift in direction that in fact acknowledged: "What we cannot remain indifferent to is to discover what has existed for a long time, rather than to reveal something new" (Naim, 1331 AH,

p. 5). Elmalılı Hamdi Efendi's idea of renewing the exercise by preserving the principles of the explicit provisions express the same *usul* in a different way.

What does Islamism say?

The varying meanings that different people attribute to the concept of Islamism confronts people with certain difficulties in evaluating the concept. Defining as Islamist terrorist organizations that have been deployed as the other of the asymmetric war under the leadership of the United States, and are based on violence, aggravates this difficulty. This stems from the fact that the concept has become ordinary in a way that includes wider concerns, categories, and orientations on a socio-cultural basis (Subaşı, 2015). On the other hand, the forms of the concept based on *tajdid* [novation] and *ihya* [improvement] proposing a purifying, pan-Islamist, anti-imperialist, pluralist, participatory, and libertarian structure that reshapes itself within the framework of needs also makes use the concept of Islamism in a common sense difficult. However, the main principle inherent in the acquis of the concept is the same in general terms: the strong mobilization of the Islamic sentiment to build a new civilization (Subaşı, 2015). In other words, the main principle is to have Islam speak to the perceptions of the current century (Ersoy, 2008, p. 403). In fact, those who define Islamism as "an ideology of liberation" point to exactly this truth.⁴ Based on this emphasis, Islamism can be defined on the one hand as the effort at having Islam re-dominate life under the conditions of the new world, and on the other hand as a self-defense movement against the West.

Given this historical context, the aforementioned discussions should be admitted as having a factual correspondence. Differences in approaches toward specific issues do not change this fact. For example, Muslims, who started to disintegrate with the invasion of some Islamic regions and the effect of nationalist movements, understandably brought the concept of *ummah* again to the agenda as a remedy. Likewise, the fact that Muslims who need restructuring in order to make sense of their weakness against the West and overcome this problem see deficiencies in the current administrative structure and engage in discussions about the nature of the proper type of administration (İnayet, 1988, p. 99). As Mohammad Iqbal (2002, p. 217) pointed out, Islam started to mean being in a problematic situation in the eyes of others, because Islam depicts a world with problems that can be listed as poverty, despair, struggling in conflicts, and being incapable of resisting the occupation.

This defect that Iqbal speaks of constitutes one aspect of the issue. The other aspect was the alienation between the public and the thinkers who were in a position to guide them. Like Iqbal, Said Halim Pasha saw problems in scholars' attitudes toward change. This is because the scholars were stuck on the periphery of a conservatively rigid attitude due to not having acted properly in determining what was dispensable. However, Said Halim Pasha stated the intellectuals to have had extremist attitudes because they could not determine a limit to change and to have been alienated from the public because they had discarded the values that had brought them into existence and therefore were unable to fulfill their pioneering role.⁵ In this context, explaining the issue by talking about the four main determinations and, in a sense, proposals made by the different scholars for different contexts would be appropriate.

Proposal 1: necessity of renewal

The existing situation was unsustainable in the face of the successive defeats and increasing Western influence. One of the most striking expressions showing how this situation was perceived by the Muslims of the period was expressed by Said-i Nursî as "*eski hâl muhâl, ya yeni*

hâl ya izmihlâl” [“Impossible to return to the old order, either adopt a new state or collapse”] (Bediü’z-Zaman, 1339 AH, pp. 51–53). In his answer to a question in the treatise called *Münazarat*, Said-i Nursî pointed out few important truths as a scholar who had taken on the mental background that manifestation has no repetition to show his interlocutors the changing conditions of the period. First, repeating what had happened and going back in history is impossible. Hence, living with the fears of the past is pointless. Second, creating a new state is natural and, in fact, necessary. For this reason, those who do not fulfill the requirements of the situation perish.

One of the fundamental questions to ask here may be: “Does what is conceptualized as a new state not lead to a transformation that makes Muslims no longer themselves?” This is a question that the Islamists of the time were also aware of. In fact, considering the conditions of the period, concern about Europe’s influence was natural. The *seyl-i huruşan* [flood of enthusiasm], which is included in many texts of the period, had great transformative power. For this reason, a stance had to be determined by taking its power into account. The real issue seems to have arisen at the point of determining this stance. Those who claimed that joining the flow or identifying another path was necessary shaped the main currents of modern Turkish thought. As I have stated before, the line that proposed joining the flow can be called Westernism, the approach that stated the renewal of historical heritage would lead to a break from its own course can be called the traditional-conservative attitude, and the mainstream that sees the possibility of following a middle path between the two options can be called Islamism.

The procedural proposal of following a different path also constitutes the second main proposition of Islamism. One of these two propositions can be seen in the phrase “What we cannot remain indifferent to is to discover what has existed for a long time, rather than to reveal something new” in Babanzade’s preface of his translation titled *Mebadi-i Felsefe’den İlmü’n-Nefs* (Naim, 1331 AH, p. 5). The second proposition points to an important distinction between the demand for Western-modernist change and the proposal for renewal within the framework of Islamic Renewal in showing both their own and the interlocutor’s perceptions. Interestingly, this second emphasis is also included in the preface to a translation of the history of European philosophy. This time, Elmalılı Hamdi Efendi was the translator. His proposition: “Progress is not for condoning past assets but for bringing them to higher values through modification and new discoveries: namely to add the values left by those who came before to that of those who come later” (Yazır, 1923, p. 16), which he expressed in the introduction to the translation of *Metalib and Mezâhib*, recommends both maintaining contact with one’s own historical experiences and reshaping them by rearranging them with new discoveries in order to overcome problems.

Proposal 2: the importance of exploring the ancient for a new construction

Coming to the second proposition, which shows Islamism’s approach about what should be protected and what should be changed (Naim, 1331 AH, p. 5). Islamist intellectuals of the period see the discovery of the ancient as a more enduring and primary effort, though perhaps more difficult than revealing the new. According to Babanzade Ahmed Naim, what one needs to do today is to discover what has always existed rather than to reveal something new (Naim, 1331 AH, p. 5).

The third proposition, as proposed by Elmalılı Hamdi Efendi, will help clarify the difference between the Westernist-modernist demand for change and the renewal effort of Islamism on the axis of Babanzade’s proposition.

Proposal 3: developing by adding the new to the old

Understanding Islamism within the context of itself necessitates positioning it somewhere within the unity of Islamic history. Elmalılı Hamdi Efendi's statements as follow show that understandable reasons are found as to why the scholars had a prudent attitude toward change.⁶ Elmalılı interpreted the strict anti-change attitude of the ulama as a deficiency in the perception of reality (Yazır, 1924, pp. 49–52).

Elmalılı Hamdi Efendi's rejection of the frivolous attitude that "wants to cut off all of its relevance to the past" and Said Halim Pasha's previously mentioned explanations about his distinction between the methods of change by adjusting and change by transforming should be seen as explanations of the same preference. In the method of change by adjusting, the needs arising from new conditions are satisfied and solutions are found for new problems while preserving the principles forming identity. In the method of change by transforming, essential things are abandoned on the other hand and replaced by different principles and institutions. These evaluations from Elmalılı and Said Halim Pasha show that one does not need to choose between protecting one's own identity and acting in accordance with the requirements of historical-social change; on the contrary, one can renew by preserving the constants that make up the self (Yazır, 1909, pp. 18, 404). Elmalılı's arguments on this issue were a summary of the Islamist acceptance whereby proceeding without having to go through a state of constriction between staying oneself and historical-social change is possible. Moreover, the fact that a scholar like Elmalılı, who was a member of the classical madrasah tradition, had not only added the knowledge of other religious schools to the opportunities of his own science and school's tradition, but had also viewed awareness of the European *acquis* as being essential is an important example of open-mindedness. However, this openness does not permit alienating Muslims by citing the European experience, as this does not meet their own needs or solve their problems but rests upon the ease of taking what is ready rather than finding a solution derived from their own tradition (Yazır, 1909, p. 415).

Proposal 4: the politics of Islamization as a holistic life order

By stating that Muslims' decline could only be overcome by reformed change, the advocates of Westernist intellectual thought claimed that religion in its most optimistic form could survive as a conscientious principle through the impact of the modernist paradigm, which they saw as the solution because this new world, shaped by the decisive victory of the Europeans, could only be rendered in this way (Asad, 2003, pp. 30–37). According to Westerners, no other way existed for Muslims to be able to survive. In fact, this was not a choice but a necessity: "They can only procure their national assets subject to this trend" (Cevdet, 1905, p. 70).

Said Halim Pasha saw the solution to be in Islamizing life with all its branches. The term Islamization also expresses a much more comprehensive and concise definition than Islamism does, in my opinion. According to Said Halim Paşa (2019, p. 149), Islamization consists of interpreting the knowledge and beliefs, ethics, science, and politics of Islam in the most appropriate way for the needs of the time and the environment, and also acting in accordance with them.

Undoubtedly, the aforementioned propositions of the projection of Islamization had a dynamism that reshaped itself in the historical process. The stages through which another existence apart from the rejectionist modernist attitude and the conservative attitude that does not allow a renewal to maintain its vitality in the face of changing conditions has reached the present day is now explained.

The centennial course of Islamism

Periodizing the history of a thought and/or movement within the framework of certain criteria essentially requires accepting that a historical-sociological existence reshapes itself as it encounters new situations. Although periodizing a century-long time interval is possible in many ways, the work talks about four periods by taking into account the changes in the local power processes with the changes in the position of Muslims in the world system and the serious differences in the intellectual and institutional enterprises that affected or were affected by these changes.

The first period: the pre-nation-state period (before 1924)

This period involves an important part of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century, which was the downturn period of the Ottoman Empire. During this period, Islamism was shaped by an anti-imperialist attitude and had the priority of reviving the Islamic nation [*ummah*], and one of the most common agenda topics of the period was the issue of the Union of Islam. Of course, the Islamists of the period, who had a serious civic and scientific background, did not interpret the course of events only through external influences. What separates Islamism from traditional rejectionism can even be said to precisely stem from its approach to this issue. The Islamists' very confident behavior can be seen in the differentiation shaped around both their own historical heritage and the issue of how to respond to the new. Indeed, the Islamist approach toward determining the opportunities and limits of renewal took shape in the context of whether what was new was compatible with the truth and whether it corresponded to the need.

While some Islamists of the period criticized the established understanding of religion as having been shaped by false interpretations, regarded it as fatalistic, and saw creating inner vitality and renewal to be required by current conditions, other Islamists were based on preserving a pro-traditional framework in order not to be subject to degeneration. The magazine *Sırat-ı Müstakim* [*The Straight Path*] was a gathering place for the first group of Islamists, and the magazine *Beyânü'l-Hak* [*Declaration of God*] was for the second group. Although some Islamists sought outside of these two main trends, these two leanings can be said to constitute the main differentiation. Authors such as Said Halim Pasha, Mehmed Akif, Şeyhülislam Musa Kazım Efendi, Babanzade Ahmed Naim Bey, Mehmed Ali Aynî, Şehbenderzade Ahmed Hilmi, Elmalılı Hamdi Efendi, Şeyhülislam Mustafa Sabri Efendi, and Tahiru'l-Mevlevi were the most published in these magazines, which began printing after the Second Constitutional Monarchy. Said-i Nursî, an important name of the period, wrote in *Volkan* magazine, which followed a more populist course.

Despite the differences reflected in the agendas and languages of the Ottoman Muslims, who were the followers of a relatively independent state, the basic propositions of Islamism at this stage can be discussed under the following headings.

Anti-imperialism

Putting an end to the occupation inevitably became a priority on the agenda of statesmen and scholars who were responsible for a country whose lands had been continually occupied since the end of the 17th century. For this reason, a consciousness was formed in almost all discussions of the period against exploitation politics, which had gained a global dimension with the occupations by European states.

Unity of Islam

During this period, a large part of the Islamic nation was occupied. Almost all Muslims – with the exceptions of the Ottoman Empire, Iran, and Afghanistan – were under colonial rule. The Ottomans, Iran, and Afghanistan, however, were under the influence of European states and Russia. Thus, this practical situation almost led to a consensus over the need for a policy of solidarity among Muslims. The pioneers of the period, who saw cooperation as a necessity, reinforced this approach with concepts such as Islamic brotherhood, unity, caliphate, and Islamic *ummah*, and brought the issue to a conceptual framework on the basis of Islamic legitimacy (Reşid Rıza, 2015).

Renewal and revival

The 11th verse of Surah Ra'd, which Islamists of the period referred to as a motto, shows that Muslim scholars perceived the problem primarily along the axis of their own weaknesses, and therefore they thought that the collapse they experienced had happened to them because of their own weaknesses. In this context, the proposals for what needed to be done can be gathered under six headings.

- 1 The first is returning to the sources. Widespread emphasis on returning to the Quran and the Sunnah of the prophet were seen to be found as a source of legitimacy for renewal.
- 2 The second is developing the idea of jihad in a new and comprehensive sense. This acceptance considers mobilizing opportunities in all areas that need repair as the duty to overcome their own weaknesses and fight the enemy. Therefore, interpreting jihad not only as a war but as a comprehensive effort to improve all areas of life is seen as one of the basic acceptances of Islamism.
- 3 The third is abandoning imitation in thought and inertia in action by transforming the fatalistic belief and moral understanding that prevails over a large part of the *ummah*. The aim is to form believers who assume responsibility for their own action instead of the understanding that expects every problem to be solved by Allah.
- 4 The fourth is to gain competence in *ijtihad*. Acknowledging the necessity of a new accumulation in order to overcome the problems the new situations had cause and forming competence to meet the needs of new situations was only possible by overcoming mediocre thinking styles and gaining the competence of *ijtihad*.
- 5 The fifth is to establish a new education system that will also compensate for the lack of science: The successive defeats of Muslims in the face of the productions brought about by the intellectual vitality and scientific accumulation that made Europeans strong were not seen as a problem that could be overcome by preserving the old education system as it was. For this reason, renewing the education system was assumed to be the basis for overcoming the problems experienced.
- 6 The sixth is a management proposal based on the *shura*. According to the Islamists, authoritarian regimes were principally improper because they are not based on the principle of *shura* and suppress the internal dynamism of the society by blocking society's channels of participation. For this reason, having the administration be based on the *shura* in principle and be one that encourages the participation of different segments of society in the process had importance.

While determining what was important, some prioritized the reform of thought and humanity, while others directly considered the fortification of institutions and political power

as central. The first course was represented by Muhammed Abduh and Mehmed Akif, and the second one was represented by many Muslim pioneers, especially Efgânî. Meanwhile, Said Halim Pasha reflected the opportunities of a holistic struggle that did not ignore the difference between historical-sociological reality and the nature of political reality, or neglect either of the lines in his works (Said Halim Paşa, 2019). Undoubtedly, the main goal of almost all of these approaches was to bring Islam to its purity in the Age of Happiness and to re-activate the role of Islam in changing world conditions. As can be clearly seen in the works of the aforementioned pioneer figures, Islamism prioritized a method that could on one hand ensure preserving what was to be preserved, while changing what needed to be changed on the other.⁷

Second period: the abolition of the caliphate and the establishment of nation-states (1924–1960)

March 3, 1924 was a turning point that led to radical changes in the course of Islamist thought. The three laws enacted in the National Assembly of the Republic of Turkey liquidated the scientific, political, and social institutions that had been shaped in the previous periods. The abolition of the caliphate led to discussions on political legitimacy, and the abolition of the Ministry of Sharia and Foundations led to the transfer of the facilities of all kinds of non-state bodies such as foundations to the state and eventually to the state monopolization of all scientific institutions with the enacting of the *Tawhid-i Tedrisat* [Unification of Education Law].

In this period, known as the Age of Islamic Movements, Islamists prioritized the rebuilding of the Islamic personality, on the one hand, and the Islamic state, on the other hand, with the priority being to fill the gap left behind by the collapsed state, the scholars who had lost their leadership, and the *fiqh* that was rapidly moving away from being a reference point. For this purpose, they embarked on organized efforts. This is how Islamic movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood, Jamaat-i Islami [Islamic Community], and Hizbu't-Tahrir [Salvation Party] emerged.

The religious life and the world of ideas that had been a part of Turkey lost their traditional institutions and foundation due to the tight clampdown from oppressive policies. As a result, issues appeared on the agenda such as how to interpret the existing political order in Turkey, how to create a fairer political order, how to resolve the problems the modernist paradigm had caused in its singular design of education, and how to position society in terms of gender.

In these single-party years, when all channels for political and social participation were closed, communities such as *Süleymanism* and *Nurizm*, and sects such as *Naqshbandi*, carried the religious envisagement of the society through secret activities (Büyükkara, 2006, p. 113). Undoubtedly, emphasis needs to be placed on the special position the Religious Affairs Administration had in this process. Religious Affairs played the role of counterbalancing the demands of the state for modernization, on the one hand, and the widely accepted Islamic vision and practices, on the other hand. Likewise, although the written sources do not make much mention, the madrasas [Muslim theological schools], which continued under the difficult conditions and were subject to prosecution, can easily be said to have undertaken a serious mission in this sense. Although they did not compose their curricula or activities directly as a political priority, the tragic rupture that had occurred from the classical curriculum that had been taught to the present, as well as the personalities and sensitivities of the scholars, laid the groundwork for the formation of an opposition, at the very least. Even today, finding those who witnessed these observations is not difficult, especially in the Eastern and Southeastern Anatolian madrasas.⁸

The third period: domestic opposition (1960–1980)

The Independence and *Nahda* [Awakening] movements in the Arab world, the Independence movement on the Indian subcontinent, and the single-party government leading the way for the transition to the multi-party period in Turkey as a result of both internal and external motives being enforced played a decisive function in shaping this period. Turkey's previously held tight stance on keeping religious life and broadcasting as a whole under control was partly shaken after 1945. In the Republican People's Party (CHP) Congress, which can be considered as the beginning of a transition period in 1947, some signs were given about how the tension created by society's religious feelings could be used for political maneuverings. In this context, the opening of Imam Hatip schools (religious vocational schools) and the appointment of a former Islamist, Şemseddin Günaltay, to the Prime Ministry can be interpreted as indicators of a different political pursuit. This process bears the concern of causing the opposition's attack to fail, on the one hand, and to appropriately reorganize the increasingly crippled social structure in the integrated context of religion, on the other hand. However, no deep intellectual concern or comprehensive project can be seen to have been proposed under these decisions. Given that these changes took place on the eve of the 1950 elections, bringing the needs and opposition that had accumulated in society under control was what was being hoped for.

The Democrat Party (DP), which took over power in 1950, was more inclined than the CHP to open up some space for religious practices. With the DP's victory in the 1950 elections, the revival of religious life began, accompanied with official relief attempts as a reflection of this policy. The number and diversity of published journals published clearly reflect this revival. As can be seen in the information imprinted by the journals, a rapid movement had started in the publishing world at the end of the 1940s. While the names of the journals mostly referred to religious sources, the promotional texts under the journal names were mostly expressed through words such as religious, moral, scientific, and literary. In a sense, this situation also shows a certain uneasiness and can be read as an effort at moving carefully in a new environment. The seedbed magazines can be said to have been formed around a language that took local dynamics into account more intensely. As a matter of fact, most of the journals published in this period attempted to redefine the nationalist understanding in a way that was compatible with Islam.

The journal *Büyük Doğu* [*The Great East*], as well as *Hareket* [*Movement*] magazine, can be seen as some of the efforts to bring Turkish nationalism together with Islam. The attitude that later led to the Turkish-Islamic synthesis can be said to have been a search for an answer to the identity crisis caused by Turkey's modernization policies, which were more specifically needed after World War II. As a matter of fact, new problems were encountered as the number of people migrating to cities increased and the traditional relations of society dissolved. In addition to this, the unfamiliarity of the official ideology with the values of the people can be understood more accurately as the reason why Necip Fazıl had established his language with both an Islamic and a nationalist conceptual framework. This discourse can be said to have been based on a framework that was aware of the state-drawn boundaries, on the one hand, and on forcing these boundaries in favor of the religious demands and needs of the people, on the other hand.

Meanwhile, Muslims in Turkey – encountering an accumulation of Islamic movements beyond the national borders during this period – distanced themselves from the nationalist discourse that had been formed, especially those before 1950, and strengthened during the Cold War years. In the process, a variety of magazines can be observed; the aforementioned course seems to have increasingly begun to shape the intellectual and political language of Turkey. This new language allowed for a critique of the established understanding of religion in Turkey and positioned its differences with the conservative-right-wing religiosity in a conceptual

framework by redefining such concepts as *dar'ul harp* [territory of war], *dar'ül İslam* [territory of peace], *rab* [Lord], Islamic Caliph, people, worshiping, the country, and the nation-state. This discourse, which has a pan-Islamist understanding, expanded and deepened after 1980 and contributed to the appeal of the Islamist community.

During this period, a relative flexibility in the constitutional framework was created as a result of both global changes and domestic political developments. Constitutional flexibility triggered an observable revival in the world of thought. Thus, the Muslims in Turkey – whose connections with the world had been severed under the supervision of a single-party administration – began to be affected by the *acquis* in other regions of the Islamic nation [*ummah*] that had emerged in the age of the nation-state. A serious loss of altitude had occurred within the boundaries of the Turkish Republic that liquidated all kinds of concepts and institutions, as well as the sociality of Islamic existence. When looking at the enlightenment resources the Muslims in Turkey had before the translations made in the 1960s, the limitedness of the opportunities for comprehending the era can easily be seen both numerically and qualitatively. Therefore, the Muslims of Turkey had understandably been seriously affected by the Jamaat-i Islami in Pakistan under the guidance of Mawdudi and by the *acquis* of the Muslim Brotherhood movement in Egypt and Syria.

A movement that emerged on the basis of the relative relaxation that emerged in the same period, differentiated not only by its wide openness but also with its scattered interests and attempts at setting its own line in publications, can also more clearly be observed to have entered into an effort to dissociate. Nevertheless, Islamists were only able to clarify a specific political demand and strategy from the 1960s onward. The increase in the Islamists' contacts outside of Turkey can be said to have had a serious effect on shaping political demands, because Muslims in Turkey had found their imaginations to have been limited by the periphery of a life framed by nationalism as a result of the subjective conditions of the nation-state process. This was the most obvious shortcoming of the contacts in the Islamic world that they encountered. After a policy without the Ottoman Empire, Muslims in Turkey discovered the consciousness of becoming an Islamic nation again with great excitement through the works they read. This tendency, which started to find a response in ideas, art, and politics, led to an observable sociality in the last quarter of the 1970s.

The fourth period: the post-modern and post-Kemalist period (post-1980)

With the interventions of the Military Coup of September 20, 1980, almost all kinds of institutions, political formations, and ideological circles were banned. With the liquidation of organized structures, the younger generations began to debate the many concepts and conceptions that were being established in the name of the research and inquiry process rather than blindly accepting the homogeneous claims created by institutional affiliations. In this context, studies on traditional Islamic concepts gained intensity, especially concepts such as Sunnah [habits and customs of the prophet], *bidat* [innovation], *tauhid* [oneness], *shirk* [disbelief], Sufism, and worship. This tendency aimed to create a new and healthy cultural climate by consecutively bringing many translations and studies on the Quran into Turkish (Ertürk, 1990, pp. 101–108).

Of course, explaining the radicalization process of Islamist thought in Turkey just by linking it only to external contacts as a mere reflection of neo-Salafism would be reductionist. As M. Ali Büyükkara (2006, pp. 115–116) indeed ascertained,

even though Salafism was deeply rooted or external violence tendencies and takfirism are relatively dominant and fed by the same ideological and cultural resources in the

Islamism of Indonesia, the Philippines, or Morocco, these features remained fairly superficial in Turkey.

The most important part of these elements is the existence of even a relatively independent state and the accumulation of Islamic knowledge that continues its existence, sometimes officially and sometimes illegally. For example, the fact that the literary discourses such as those of Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, Sezai Karakoç, and Nuri Pakdil have a special place in the Islamic discourse in Turkey should be evaluated in this context.⁹ Nevertheless, the fact that Islamists in Turkey continued to reinforce their contacts with the Islamic world in the second half of the 1970s, especially in Egypt and Syria, needs to be emphasized.

After World War II, however, and in parallel with the world, an axial change had occurred in terms of the military, politics, and paradigms in Turkey. The main transformation that was realized late in Turkey – which had been subjected to military and political sieges first with the United Nations and then with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, as well as an economic siege with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund – was experienced as a siege in the world of mentality. Thus, Turkey found itself surrounded by an anti-communist priority in the 1970s and with a framework that prioritized stopping the rising Islamist wave in the 1980s. Everything from politics to the structuring of education and from the regulations made in the economic system to international priorities was closely related to this climate. Nevertheless, the 1980s will remain in memory as a period in which radical thought and practices in Turkey were revealed at their highest level (Büyükkara, 2006, p. 130).

Contrary to the rise of radical discourse and circles, the line that existed as the National Order Party in 1970 and the National Salvation Party in 1972 was seen to have been unable to create a strong presence in the 1980s. The Welfare Party, the third party of the National Vision course, went through a rather ineffective process. With the cyclical change, the Welfare Party was the first partner of the government with the highest votes, heralding a new process. However, as a reflection of the concept of changing global order, the Welfare Party was overthrown as a result of the balance adjustment made with the post-modern coup. Balanced with the post-modern coup of February 28, 1997, Turkey was stabilized through a series of constitutional, military, administrative, and educational amendments.

The feeling that the language scholars, intellectuals, and communities used misses the current reality results in different segments of society, especially young generations and women, having problems with the current religious language. The need exists to negotiate this situation using a more comprehensive evaluation process rather than a language that leads to defining and marginalizing the situation such as “the corruption of women” or “transforming young people to deists.” The current religious language used by preachers will apparently continue to exist unless what is to be protected, changed, and abstained from in the historical heritage gets clarified in the process of negotiations. This language is not enough for understanding, explaining, and determining the current reality.

Conclusion

Muslims these days are caught between the mental bluntness in Islamist circles that proposes *tajdid* [renewal] and the imperative language of traditionalist discourse that appears ahistorical. Being under an overly introverted agenda also sustains this tension. A heavy air is currently being inhaled whereby almost every Islamic claim is perceived as a problem center by another devout Muslim community. A language has suddenly circulated in which everyone tries to define themselves with historical identities while demonizing others. The perception of threat has been put on the

periphery of Muslims' vicious internal conflicts. Even developments in the region are evaluated through this perception of an internal threat. These and similar motives force Islamist imaginaries to live in a period of pragmatic rule. Undoubtedly, many political utopias have resulted with totalitarian regimes and organizational structures that contributed to this conclusion.

In summary, Islamism based its existence in the 19th century on two main elements. The first of these elements was based on making sense of and repairing the internal weaknesses and overcoming the colonial siege. In fact, the preference of existence built on these two elements was based on both a realistic and encompassing point of view. For this reason, any construction activity to be undertaken today will not be able to go a long way without considering these two principles. Any understanding that neglects or devaluates one of these points will continue to either end up in an adventure that ends with mass disappointments or be buried in a way that does not lead to its purpose. However, the point that needs to be considered today is acting with the realization that the intention to achieve these goals is primarily necessary but not sufficient for achieving the purpose.

Islamists have currently reached a point where the issue is either based on constructing a new system or participating in the current one. The narrowing of Islamists' understanding of construction and opposition needs to be discussed at this point. In my opinion, speaking about or deploying Islamism as a discourse and opposition within the nation-state is not the proper approach, for Islamism expresses the Muslim stance against the modernist paradigm, on the one hand, while expressing the struggle to renew its historical heritage, on the other hand. Reducing Islamism to a stance opposed to national power rather than a total opposition to imperialism while ignoring the possibility of building a different life would be a serious error in assessment. Carefully reading the following lines from Mehmed Akif Ersoy (2008, pp. 160–195), which evaluate what happened as a whole, will be sufficient for determining the validity of this judgment.

<i>Sırr-ı terakkinizi siz,</i>	[You are the secret to your progress]
<i>Başka yerlerde taharriye heveslenmeyiniz.</i>	[Do not desire to search for it elsewhere]
Onu kendinde bulur yükselecek bir millet;	[A nation that will rise finds it within itself]
Çünkü her noktada taklid ile sökmez hareket.	[Because movement through imitation does not work at every point]
Alınız ilmini Garb'ın, alınız san'atini;	[Receive the West's knowledge, receive its art]
Veriniz hem de mesâînize son sür'atini.	[And also give your effort with full haste]
Çünkü kâbil değil artık yaşamak bunlarsız;	[For without these, survival is impossible]
Çünkü milliyeti yok san'atin, ilmin; yalnız,	[For alone there is no nation, no art, no science]
İyi hâturda tutun ettiğim ihtârı demin:	[Remember well the warning I have just given]
Bütün edvâr-ı terakkîyi yarıp geçmek için,	[To plow through all the circles of progress]
Kendi "mâhiyyet-i rûhiyye" niz olsun kılavuz.	[May your natural spirituality be your guide]
Çünkü beyhûdedir ümmîd-i selâmet onsuz.	[Because without it, the hope for peace is in vain]

Akif's verses are a summary of the thoughts of the lead author of *Sirat al-Mustaqeem* magazine, which had constituted the most important environment of Islamism discourse in Akif's time. Here, Akif should be remembered as the person who wrote the Turkish national anthem as the text of the broadest social consensus that had occurred during the establishment of the Republic of Turkey. Therefore, making an assessment of what Islamism is would certainly be more accurate by taking it on the axis of such a text instead of current indicators. If this were to happen, the attitudes of Islamists could be seen in the face of both past knowledge and discussions on innovation. As can be clearly understood from Akif's verses, the Islamist imagination adapts to contact within the framework of both principles and needs rather than fighting with tradition and the new situation. This attitude can be said to be the most fundamental choice that distinguishes Islamism from traditionalist rejectionism and modernist rejectionism.

Notes

- 1 These movements, which adopted the "idea of progress" of the West, developed in the second half of the century in many other non-European states and colonies besides the Ottoman Empire. Most of those who led these movements were "intellectuals" from the developing middle class of those countries (M Abu-Rabi, 1996, p. 10).
- 2 For the effects of this period on intellectuals, see Ülken (1966, pp. 33–120).
- 3 "Terakki öyle bir mefhum-i âmmdır ki müteallikine ve gayesine göre birçok medlûller ile alakadardır" ["Progress is such a general concept that it can be used in different ways depending on the place and purpose of use"] (Yazır, 2011, p. 261).
- 4 For different evaluations on the nature of Islamism, see Karpaz (2001, pp. 7–38).
- 5 For a literary description of this situation, see Ersoy (2015, pp. 46–60).
- 6 For a detailed assessment of the role of the scholars in modernization/innovation efforts, see Cihan (2004), Bein (2011).
- 7 In this context, the following works can be viewed as important documents of the language formed: Said Halim Paşa (2019), Yazır (2011), Ersoy (2008).
- 8 Regarding the witnesses to this tradition, see Çelen (2013), Öztoprak (2003).
- 9 Regarding these people's position on Turkish Islamism, see Büyükkara, (2006, pp. 116–119).

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